CLAYOQUOT PLATEAU PROVINCIAL PARK

PURPOSE STATEMENT AND ZONING PLAN

September 2003

Approved by:

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Date: Sept. 6/03

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Purpose Statement and Zoning Plan

Primary Role
The **primary** role of Clayoquot Plateau Provincial Park is to protect an undisturbed and unique high elevation karst/cave landscape and associated ecosystem s. The park features a high elevation plateau with several small lakes. It is one of a number of karst/cave systems on Vancouver Island, which has the bulk of British Columbia's cave/karst topography. Six cave systems have been protected ranging from Horne Lake Caves Provincial Park which has been highly explored to Clayoquot Plateau Provincial Park where exploration has been limited to a few caves.

The Clayoquot Plateau area was originally proposed for ecological reserve status as it is considered to be one of the best examples of a self-contained coastal karst ecosystem in a completely undisturbed condition, and it contains outstanding karst surface features of textbook quality. The area is superior to other karst areas for its diversity of landforms, geological and vegetation features. The park protects a complete altitudinal cross-section of forest and other plant communities from lowland to alpine levels, and a large number of disjunct plant occurrences and unusual plant combinations as well as pristine old growth forest. Twenty-nine rare plant species have been recorded in the park, six of which are blue-listed.

The lakes in the park are the headwater of a major tributary of the Clayoquot River. Part of the tributary is protected in the park, and it contains high quality spawning and rearing areas for salmonids as well as habitat for amphibians such as the northwestern salamander, clouded salamander and western red-backed salamander.

Secondary Role
The **secondary** role is to protect cultural features. The park protects a prehistoric processing site where aboriginal peoples used to hunt marmots as well as other animals such as black bear, black-tailed deer, and marten for meat and pelts. A discovery of bones from 13 Vancouver Island marmots in one of the caves has provided important historical information about the area. The bones were found to be 2,600 years old and some had fine cuts marks on the surface resulting from sharp stone tools. This finding provides insight into the prehistoric range of the Vancouver Island marmot, which was much more widespread in the past, and contributes to answering speculations on the demise of this highly endangered species.

Tertiary Role
The **tertiary** role is to provide recreation opportunities in a pristine wilderness setting. Although snow melts very late in the season and the park is extremely difficult to access, a number of recreation pursuits are available including: advanced caving; wilderness camping; nature appreciation; climbing; and hiking are possible.

There are no developed trails in the park, but determined visitors will find a pristine forest of Sitka spruce, hemlock, and cedar, interesting karst features and a scenic view of Clayoquot Sound from the plateau's summit.

The extensive cave system is suitable for exploration by experienced cavers only as it is very hazardous and difficult to access. Although there may be potential for caving opportunities in the future, this area is sensitive and its use is not recommended until a management plan is complete.

Management Issues

Known Management Issue	Response
Lack of knowledge of cave system	➢ Work with the Ministry of Forests and cave groups to gather information on the cave system. ➢ Work with the Vancouver Island Cave/Karst Management Committee and other caving organizations to develop partnerships for inventory, research, stewardship, and monitoring park use.
Impact of adjacent logging on natural values	➢ Work with the Ministry of Forests and forest companies to manage adjacent areas to protect cave/karst features and other park values.
Public safety related to caving	➢ Work with BC Cave Rescue to develop safety protocols and procedures specific to the park. ➢ Develop public information regarding safety precautions for cave use.
Impact of recreation and ecotourism on natural and cultural values	➢ Exercise the precautionary principle and prepare a management plan in concert with other cave parks in the near future. ➢ Implement the Backcountry Recreation Impact Monitoring (BRIM) process and undertake an assessment to determine the carrying capacity of the caves. ➢ Develop a recreation plan (for all Clayoquot Sound protected areas) to develop a strategy for visitor facilities, acceptable levels of use, and public information on appropriate behaviours. Work with First Nations where appropriate.
Lack of park awareness	➢ Ensure the park boundary is identified. ➢ Increase offsite interpretation information.
Relationships with First Nations and pending treaty settlements	➢ Develop good working relationships with First Nations to develop an understanding and appreciation of protected area status and park values. ➢ Liaise with the Central Region Board (CRB) to inform them of management issues in the park.
Participation in the Clayoquot Biosphere initiative	➢ Work with the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust, CRB and Parks Canada to ensure the Environmental Stewardship Division's perspective is taken into account in activities and projects associated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Biosphere Reserve in Clayoquot Sound.

Zoning

Special Feature Zone -- covers the entire park (3,156 hectares) in recognition of the caves and karst topography as well as the rare plants and paleontological sites. The objective of this zone is to protect and present significant natural or cultural features, resources or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage values.

Conservation

Representation - ecosection	☒	Clayoquot Plateau Provincial Park makes a small contribution of 1.5% to the overall representation of the Windward Island Mountains Ecosection, which is well represented in the protected areas system at 17.4%.
- biogeoclimatic subzone/variant	☒	Clayoquot Plateau Provincial Park makes a small contribution of 1.14% to the representation of Coastal Western Hemlock (vm2) biogeoclimatic variant, which is under-represented in the protected areas system at 8.7%. It contributes minimally with 0.48% to the representation of CWHvm1, which is under protected provincially at 7%. It also makes a minimal contribution of 0.38% to Mountain Hemlock (mm1) variant, which is well represented in the protected areas system at 16%. The park makes an insignificant contribution to Alpine Tundra (ATunp) and CWHvm2 both of which are well represented in the protected areas system at 22.47% and 16.02% respectively.
Special Features	☒	29 rare and uncommon plant species, disjunct plant occurrences, unusual plant combinations, small lakes, mature forest, undisturbed coastal karst ecosystem, diversity of karst formations, caves, and sinkholes (honeycombing).
Rare/Endangered Values	☒	6 blue-listed plants: alpine anemone; corrupt spleenwort; smooth willowherb; sand-dwelling wallflower; western hedysarum; and Olympic mountain aster. These plants are rare in British Columbia with few known occurrences.
Scientific/Research Opportunities	☒	Opportunities for further research in an undisturbed coastal karst ecosystem, paleontology, marmot history, and on the connection between karst topography and rare plants.

Recreation

Representation		
backcountry	☒	Challenging and remote wilderness area
destination	☒	Caving destination for expert cavers
travel corridor	☐	Not Applicable
local recreation	☐	Not Applicable

Special Opportunities	☐	Rare plant interpretation offsite
Education/Interpretation Opportunities	☒	First Nation history and traditions and offsite interpretation of caves/karst and rare plants

Cultural Heritage

Representation	☒	First Nation pre-contact history
Special Feature	☒	Paleontological remains – worked marmot bones found in cave

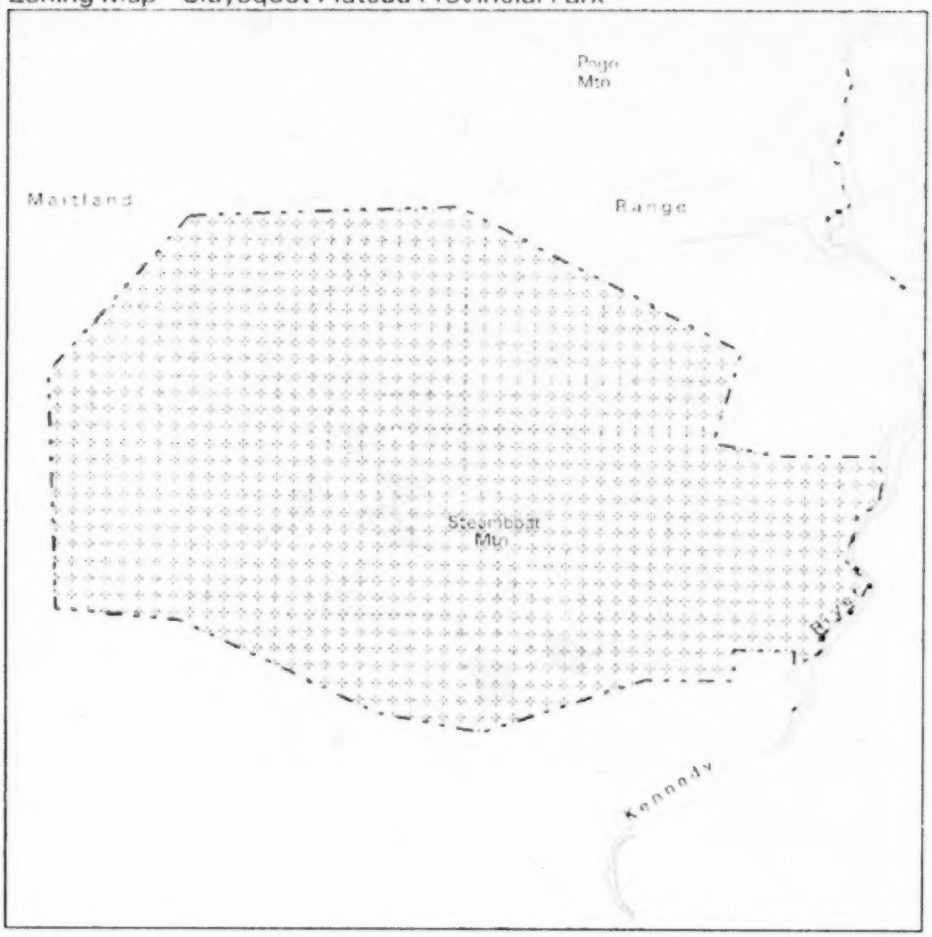
Other Management Considerations

Other Designations	☒	Part of the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Reserve
Relationship to other PAs	☒	Part of a system of protected areas in Clayoquot Sound and part of a system of cave/karst protected areas on Vancouver Island
Co-operative Management Arrangements	☒	Part of the Interim Management Agreement Extension with the Central Region Board
Partnerships	☐	Not Applicable
Vulnerability	☒	The karst topography is vulnerable to recreational use and the park is vulnerable to adjacent logging
Relationship to other Strategies	☒	Interim Measures Extension Agreement. Identified for protection in the 1993 Clayoquot Sound Land Use Decision. Originally proposed as an ecological reserve.

Area: 3,155.5 hectares

Date of establishment: July 12, 1995

Zoning Map - Clayoquot Plateau Provincial Park



Special Feature

Protected Area Boundary